

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Las Vegas Grammar School (Fifth Street School)

AND/OR COMMON

Clark County Courthouse Annex

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

400 Las Vegas Boulevard South

N/A -- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Las Vegas

N/A VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

Nevada

CODE

NV

COUNTY

Clark

CODE

003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

☐ STRUCTURE

☐ SITE

☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC

☐ PRIVATE

☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS

☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

☐ UNOCCUPIED

☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED

☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE

☐ MUSEUM

☐ COMMERCIAL

☐ PARK

☐ EDUCATIONAL

☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

☐ ENTERTAINMENT

☐ RELIGIOUS

☒ GOVERNMENT

☐ SCIENTIFIC

☐ INDUSTRIAL

☐ TRANSPORTATION

☐ MILITARY

☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Clark County

c/o Clark County Commission

STREET & NUMBER

225 Bridger

CITY, TOWN

Las Vegas

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Nevada 89101

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clark County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

309 S. Third

CITY, TOWN

Las Vegas

STATE

Nevada

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic Preservation Inventory and Planning Guidelines (City of Las Vegas) 1978
Historic Resources of Central Las Vegas (Nevada State Museum & Historical Society) 1984

DATE

1978, 1984

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☒ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Nevada State Museum & Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Las Vegas

STATE

Nevada

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT☒ GOOD☐ FAIR☐ DETERIORATED☐ RUINS☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Las Vegas Grammar School, built in 1936, is a completely realized example, for its era, of Mission-style architecture in Las Vegas. The single-story public school is an extensive complex, occupying a full block in Clark's Las Vegas Townsite, the historical core of Las Vegas. Rear wings built perpendicular to the main building create a series of closed and open courtyards with covered walkways. Built in an era before air-conditioning, the building was an excellent adaptation to a desert environment. The complex functioned as a school until the 1960s when it was converted to use as a Clark County Courthouse Annex. The exterior has largely retained its integrity, though its once-landscaped courtyards and playgrounds have been paved for parking. The interior has undergone major remodeling, preserving little of its original division of space.

The main block of the school parallels and faces Las Vegas Boulevard (Fifth Street). This is topped by a tiled gable roof which is interrupted near its center by a projecting wing with cross gable and a taller rectangular entrance loggia with a hipped roof. An arched entrance on either side of these projections provides an unobstructed vista into a completely enclosed courtyard at the rear. The more northerly of these entrances has a two-bay vaulted ceiling supported by columns with ornate floral capitals.

The Fifth Street facade is, at present, largely unadorned. Windows have been cut into the facade below each of the fourteen original windows, each of which had three panes. Interior ceilings have been lowered in remodeling, rendering the original windows superfluous. This change tends to negatively alter the original appearance of the main facade. (The lowered ceilings also remove the feeling of airiness and spaciousness of the interior which was noted at the time of the building's opening.) Also detracting from the appearance is the uniform coat of white paint which obliterates the vertical articulations created by alternating reinforced concrete piers and concrete block bays. The plain facade is also relieved at the north end by a small rounded extension toward Fifth Street which has seven French windows. This space originally served as an extension of the science room and contained a growing area and aquarium. An arched arcade runs the length of the rear of the main building, intersecting the three perpendicular wings. Columns of the arcade support a shed tile roof.

The longest of the three wings terminates in a structure which originally served as a gymnasium and auditorium. The gymnasium opened onto Fourth Street with an arched entrance loggia echoing that of the main entrance on Fifth Street. The capitals on the columns here lack the decoration of those on the main entrance.

Considerable care was taken with the decoration of the complex, considering the Depression era date of the building's construction. Exterior walls were white with vivid yellow, orange, and terra-cotta colored highlights. Original dark red tile walkways in the courtyards remain, though the main courtyard surfaces have been paved. Set into the rear wall of the one completely enclosed courtyard is a decorative fountain and fish pond with an intricate green and blue mosaic tile pattern. Similar blue and green tile is used sparingly to highlight other areas of the building, including the base of the flag pole in front.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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Description Continued

Architecturally, the building was and remains, despite the negative alterations mentioned, a gem. Viewed from practically any perspective, an intriguing mix of architectural features pleases the eye: redwood and concrete piers; walkways with arched and shed-roofed ceilings and exposed beams; closed, open, and semi-enclosed courtyards; and a mixture of shed, gable, and hipped roofs. These otherwise disparate elements blend well to create an outstanding example of public architecture.

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1936

BUILDER/ARCHITECT George K. Thompson/Orville L. Clark

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CRITERION C

The Las Vegas Grammar School (Clark County Courthouse Annex) is significant as an outstanding example of Mission-style architecture in Las Vegas. It exemplifies, along with three other major public edifices built in the 1930s (Las Vegas Hospital, Las Vegas High School, and a new post office) the impact of federal projects upon the growth of Las Vegas. The massive Hoover Dam construction project created a population explosion in Las Vegas and helped the city to avoid many of the economic problems associated with the Depression. The school itself was one of several projects of lasting importance which were built with federal funds funneled through New Deal agencies. As by far the largest of three elementary schools in the district, the Las Vegas Grammar School provided the early education for an entire generation of community leaders.

From its founding as a railroad diversion point in 1905 until preparatory work began on the construction of Hoover Dam in the late 1920s, Las Vegas was oriented in almost every way to the railroad. The Las Vegas Land and Water Company, a subsidiary of the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad, laid out the townsite, sold the lots, and provided water and electricity to the small town. Income derived from the railroad payroll and from shipping and passenger traffic associated with the railroad was the economic mainstay.

For its first two decades, Las Vegas grew only very slowly. Its population and economic fortunes fluctuated according to the activities of the railroad. Housing and commercial properties were mostly modest, unimposing, and utilitarian. For over two decades the Mission-style passenger terminal at the head of Fremont Street, the main commercial district was the most imposing building.

Educational facilities too were quite modest. Until 1911, a two room building on Second Street sufficed for all grades through high school. In that year, a large new building was completed on the block adjoining the present site of the Courthouse Annex. The high school occupied four rooms in one wing of this building. By 1917, the high school student population had sufficiently increased as to require a separate building which was constructed on the present site of the Annex and next to what now was occupied solely by the grammar school.

This arrangement was sufficient until the rapid growth in the community occasioned by the Boulder Canyon Project. During this period of the late 1920s and early 1930s many new residences and, as mentioned above, several large public buildings, including a new high school, were constructed. The upper grades of the grammar school moved into the vacated 1917 high school building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Significance Continued

The old high school building, now housing the upper grades of the grammar school, was destroyed by fire in May 1934. In this Depression year, the city had no funds to rebuild, and during the next school year, students were instructed in tents on the playground. Application was made to the Public Works Administration for a grant of \$72,000 and a loan of \$88,000, but the project was rejected by Work Progress Administrator Harry Hopkins. Hopkins apparently wished to preserve local labor for smaller WPA jobs. Intervention by Congressman James Scrugham and Senators Key Pittman and Patrick McCarran finally secured a grant and loan package totalling \$165,000. A subsequent PWA grant bought the total cost of the school to just over \$230,000. The remainder of the money came via a bond sale.

The school opened in the fall of 1936. Through only the upper three grades attended the new facility, its first principal, K.O. Knudson later recalled that classes were still in excess of forty students per classroom. The building served as a school facility until the 1960s, when it was converted to its present use.

Architecturally, the building is one of a very small number built during the period which are significant reminders of the expansive and optimistic mood of the dam construction era. It is also a reminder of the major role which federal government projects have played in the growth of Las Vegas.

Las Vegas Review-Journal

Las Vegas Sun

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 11 66704 4003608
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

Block 58
 Clark's Las Vegas Townsite

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Frank Wright, Curator of Education
 ORGANIZATION

August 1986
 DATE

Nevada State Museum and Historical Society
 STREET & NUMBER

(702) 486-5205
 TELEPHONE

State Mail Complex, 700 Twin Lakes Drive
 CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Las Vegas

Nevada 89158

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



